

March 7, 2010

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

I am writing to urge you to support HB 5423, An Act Concerning Dissection Choice.

Many students at all levels of education have ethical, religious and other objections to harming animals, and modern non-animal learning methods like interactive computer simulators allow educators to strike a balance between their educational objectives and students varying attitudes on the treatment of animals. Myriad research shows that alternatives to dissection can teach biology as well as or better than dissection, and that they are also significantly less expensive since computer software only needs to be purchased once (and is sometimes available for free on the internet) and animal specimens must be purchased every year.

Fifteen states have laws and policies allowing students to opt-out of dissection and other classroom animal experiments without being penalized and the country's largest professional organizations representing science teachers--the National Science Teachers Association (<http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/animals.aspx>) and the National Association of Biology Teachers (<http://www.nabt.org/websites/institution/index.php?p=97>)—both approve of the use of non-animal replacements for dissection and encourage teachers to be receptive students' objections to harming animals by providing them with alternative assignments when requested.

Our state's education system should be inclusive and considerate of all ethical perspectives on the treatment of animals. Not allowing students to opt-out of animal dissection can and does deter some interested in Biology from pursuing this career path, unnecessarily thwarting the aspirations of young scientists who are state and country desperately need to pursue their dreams if we are to stay globally competitive in this area.

For educational, ethical and economical reasons, HB 5423 is a sound piece of legislation that deserves your support.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Katharine Hughes
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